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Atari Online News, Etc.
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->From the Editor's Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"
"""""""""""""""""""""""""""""

There are heat waves, and there are Heat Waves, and there are HEAT WAVES! Eleven days in a row with temperatures at least 90 degrees, in my neck of the woods. Skip a day, and we're back on track for another long run. I have to tell ya, this weather is doing me in! I was never a big fan of air conditioning because it used to leave the air dry and stale, but in recent years, I've become a huge fan (no pun intended) of it. I don't think that I could live without them available.

After my recent health issues, my cardiologist decided that it was time for me to get a complete physical. That happened this week, with the usual battery of tests, including some poking and prodding. I've been having some pains in my legs and one foot, so I started to have some tests for those, as well. Hopefully those issues can be easily resolved, but there's potential for some surgery. Not looking forward to that possibility! Otherwise, I feel great, other than the effects of this heat and humidity that just doesn't want to abate!

So, again this week I'm going to seek refuge under the AC as soon as I can put this issue to bed for another week. I know, I know, I promised some words of wisdom for this week. Well, I'll cheat for a bit and just offer these few words of wisdom: drink plenty of fluids and stay cool!

Until next time...

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING
compiled by Joe Mirando
joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. Another week has come and gone, and it finally seems that there's a little bit of 'good' to talk about where the BP/Gulf Oil Spill is concerned.

After dumping something more than 200 million gallons of crude oil into

the Gulf, it looks like they may have finally staunched the flow.

Now, as you've no doubt heard, this is not the permanent fix, and to tell you the truth I was quite nervous as they began shutting down the various outlets on this new cap. As has been reported all over the place, it is possible that the pressure inside the pipe will rupture it, causing either another explosive release or, if it is below the sea floor, pushing the crude oil into the bedrock, where it could sit in wait for who knows what to push it up through the ocean floor and into the Gulf.

Let's hope that pipe holds up under the pressure (8,000 to 9,000 psi is what they're looking for). If that puppy cuts loose, I don't know what they can do. I mean, it's one thing if the well "busts a seam" someplace where they can get to it and either seal it or cut into the pipe before it and divert or stop the flow, but if it's down deep where there's nothing to do but flood mud and hope it stops, this could get real ugly, real fast. Well, let's say uglier, faster. And this time, there's even less of a chance that filling the pipe with mud and golf balls will stop the leak.

So far, as I'm writing this, the news is all good. Everything's holding and it's looking like this could finally work.

I guess the law of averages has finally caught up with BP.

But the fact that there's no oil gushing from this puppy doesn't mean it's over. In fact they've got to be more vigilant now than ever. If the pressure spikes, it could rupture the pipe, or it could "blow out" deep below the ocean floor, neither of which is good. Of course, that's just half of what they have to watch for. The other half is a pressure drop.

In that case, it's probably already too late, since lower pressure would mean that the oil is "going somewhere". I don't know what the would/could do, and I don't know if THEY have any idea either. Most of this stuff is new to everybody.

So while BP execs and former Coast Guard Admirals cross their fingers, fishermen and everyone else who makes their living from the bounty of the Gulf watch the tarballs ride in on the tide, hoping that they don't settle in the oyster beds, the marshes and the wetlands, and the beaches where the rich folks have their summer homes. Of course, there will be federal money for relief... there always is... and I wouldn't be at all surprised if some of the people who get money as reparation for damaged beach front property are some of the same people who had a hand in CAUSING the mess in the first place. Meanwhile, people who used to depend on the Gulf for their livelihoods will have to dig and scratch, uproot their families, move away to where there are jobs or families that can help them out.

And that says nothing of the ecosystem that's being savaged by this. Will the bluefin tuna survive? Dolphins? Sea turtles? Sperm whales? How about the any of the creatures that live in the watercolumn, from the surface down to the sea floor? My guess is that we'll be seeing endangered species due to this disaster for decades to come, and there will be much arguing and gnashing of teeth and little will be done... because, after the fact, there's probably very little that CAN be done. There's 2,000,000 gallons of oil out there somewhere, floating around in the gulf, and it ain't all just floating on top like warm salad dressing. If fate is kind to us (for a change), we may be able to get this 'cleaned up' in a decade. But that still doesn't undo the damage that's been done already. There's already talk that the oil (and gas) might be keeping all kinds of things from happening. Everything from disrupting the carbon cycle to oxygenation of

the water to causing all manner of illnesses in wildlife, local residents and relief/cleanup workers. This IS a catastrophe, folks. Even if there's not another drop of oil lost to the Gulf waters, it's a disaster, and one that I don't think we've yet fully grasped. It'd be nice if I was wrong. Let's hope, huh?

Meanwhile, one of the pillars of the technology world, Apple, has a problem on its hands with its new iPhone4. It seems that you can disrupt the antenna by touching the edge of the phone in a certain place, and people aren't happy about paying all that money for a phone that drops calls at a touch. Granted, it could come in handy for difficult conversations with bosses and ex-wives, but it's not something any of us usually look for in a cell phone. The thing that gets me is that Apple sold millions of these things in the first week. What happened to reviewers? Did they all spend time playing Pacman via Google on these things instead of actually putting them through their paces? Were they so wowed by the 'sexiness' of the gadget that they neglected to actually test? True, Consumer Reports seem to have done its job, but it was actually too little too late. Add to that the fact that Apple spent time trying to figure out some way that it wasn't their fault, and you've got the makings of a real Silicon Valley soap opera. "Oh, there's nothing wrong with the phone, it's they way they're HOLDING them!" Yeah, that worked out well, didn't it?

I've got to admit that I am among the geeks who wait semi-patiently for new gadgets to come out so I can 'ooooh and ahhhh' over them. I never buy any of them, but I love to check them out and ogle over the specifications and abilities. But for me, a cell phone should do one thing well... be a phone. I've got a computer to surf the web, and a spiffy digital camera to take pictures. All I really want from a phone is to not have to say "Huh?... What? I can't hear you! What did you say? Your seamstress turned ninety? Ohhh... you see stress turn what?... nevermind, I'll call you from a land line."

Hey, I've got an idea! Why don't we just flood the oil pipe sticking out of the ocean floor with mud and defective iPhone4s? Let's kill two birds with one stone and see if that works!

Well, that's it for this week, friends and neighbors. Let's hope that things continue to improve in the Gulf. In the grand scheme of things, the iPhone isn't even a ripple. I'm keeping my fingers crossed, but not holding my breath.

Till next week, keep your ears open so that you'll hear what they're saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week's Gaming Section
  """""""""""""""""""""""""""""""

- Atari's Iconic Haunted House Lives Again!
- Video Game Sales Slump!

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!
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Atari's Iconic Haunted House Lives Again!

Enter the Haunted House, if you dare. Atari's classic groundbreaking game has returned with more chills, cool new unlockables and plenty of spooky new enemies. The terrifying fun that lies within Graves Mansion is back as Atari, one of the world's most recognized publishers and producers of interactive entertainment, scares up its legendary classic, Haunted House re-imagined for a new generation of gamers in celebration of the title's 30th anniversary. Haunted House will take control of Wii, Xbox LIVE Arcade for the Xbox 360 video game and entertainment system from Microsoft, and Windows PC Download this fall, with suspense filled challenges, new chilling environments and more frightful enemies than ever before.

Haunted House pays homage to the classic favorite as players fight for their lives in Graves Mansion as the grandchildren of the original character that disappeared without a trace in the evil mansion over 30 years ago. Chased by pesky poltergeists, haunted by scary skeletons and exhausted from battles with creepy creatures, players are in a goosebump-educing fight to explore the dark and creepy depths of Graves Mansion in search of the four lost pieces of the magical urn. The player's goal is to reassemble the urn and defend their family's legacy with the aid of mystical tomes, powerful light sources and multiple keys.

"The glowing eyes and mysterious urn of Haunted House still resonates with gamers who made the original franchise a blockbuster hit," says Jim Wilson, President of Atari. "Atari looks forward to introducing a new generation of gamers to the fun and suspense of Graves Mansion and bringing families together with the magic that is Haunted House."

The pick up-and-play arcade-style adventure allows players to jump right in and begin battling for their family's legacy and explore the dark and mysterious levels. An eerie, 3D rich environment of towers, basements and catacombs draws players into the haunted world and cursed story. Find hidden treasures, solve puzzles, fight bosses, and navigate through the spooky mansion and multiple levels on the way to a showdown with Zachary Graves.

Video Game Sales Slump as Xbox 360 Sales Surge

Retail video game sales fell slightly in June, dragged under by anemic handheld hardware and software sales, but bolstered by strong console unit growth. Helped by new model sales, the Xbox 360 topped the Wii for the first time in months, pulling ahead of Nintendo's console by roughly 30,000 units, and Sony's PS3 by a comfortable 147,000 unit spread.

But industry sales were down overall, dropping from $1.17 billion in June 2009 to $1.10 billion, year-on-year.

"Unfortunately, the industry realized a decline versus the same time period last year, driven by decreases in sales of portable hardware and console and portable software," said NPD analyst Anita Frazier, singling out the console hardware unit sales increase--35 percent overall--as "a bright spot."

Look for total U.S. annual revenue to slide in somewhere between $18 and $21 billion, predicts Frazier, highlighting Microsoft and Sony's motion controllers (Kinect and Move, respectively) and "the strong slate of content still to come," by which she probably means games like Metroid: Other M, Mafia 2, L.A. Noire, Brink, Halo: Reach, Dead Rising 2, EA's football lineup (NCAA, Madden), Sonic 4, Medal of Honor, Fallout: New Vegas, Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II, Fable III, Final Fantasy XIV, Gran Turismo 5, and Call of Duty: Black Ops (not to mention PC biggies like StarCraft II, Elemental: War of Magic, DC Universe Online, and Civilization V).

June 2010 video game hardware sales, with growth compared to June 2009:

511k - Nintendo DS (-33%)
452k - Xbox 360 (+88%)
423k - Wii (+17%)
305k - PlayStation 3 (+85%)
121k - PSP (-26%)

In addition to across the board year-on-year console growth, Frazier noted hardware sales were up slightly from May 2010 in average sales per week. The Xbox 360 had it second largest non-holiday showing since Halo 3 launched back in September 2007, and the PS3 continued its unbroken upward sales streak--11 months of consecutive year-on-year increases.

June 2010 video game software sales:

583k - Read Dead Redemption (Xbox 360)
548k - Super Mario Galazy 2 (Wii)
380k - Read Dead Redemption (PS3)
201k - New Super Mario Bros. Wii (Wii)
175k - Just Dance (Wii)

Wii Fit Plus w/Balance Board, Toy Story 3 (DS), UFC 2010: Undisputed (Xbox 360), LEGO Harry Potter: Years 1-4 (Wii), and UFC 2010: Undisputed (PS3) slotted 6 through 10, respectively, but NPD didn't offer sales figures at time of publication.

Red Dead Redemption notched its second consecutive month at the top of the software sales chart, and Frazier says it's now the top holder for year-to-date sales.

While software sales slumped were down overall, Frazier said the top 10 titles actually sold comparably to June 2009's top 10 list, noting that "game sales are more concentrated this year" in terms of top-sellers.

But it was bad news for the new Tiger Woods game (guesses why abound), which only sold 32 percent of last year's total. The game didn't even make the top 10.

Time for a new feature golfer, EA?

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A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Facebook Launches Child Safety Application

Social networking website Facebook has agreed to adopt an application aimed at improving the online safety of its younger users, a child protection group said on Monday.

The application, which follows a long campaign by the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP), appears on a user's profile page when they add or bookmark it and allows children and teenagers to report suspicious or inappropriate behavior.

Particularly aimed at users aged 13 to 18, it also provides help, advice and support about staying safe online.

"We know from speaking to offenders that a visible deterrent could protect young people online," said Jim Gamble, chief executive of CEOP, adding that the application should provide reassurance to parents whose teenagers use the site.

An automatic message will appear on the Facebook homepage of all teenage users, inviting them to add the application.

Pressure to introduce such measures intensified toward the end of last year after 17-year-old Ashleigh Hall was kidnapped, raped and murdered by a man posing as a teenager whom she had met through Facebook.

"Together we have developed a new way of helping young people stay safe online," Joanna Shields, Facebook's vice president for Europe, Middle-East and Africa, said of the link-up.

"It is only through the constant and concerted efforts of the industry, police, parents and young people themselves that we can all keep safe online."

Groups Sue Massachusetts Over Newly Expanded Obscenity Law

A coalition of booksellers and Internet content providers on Tuesday filed a federal lawsuit challenging an expansion of Massachusetts' obscenity law to include electronic communications that may be harmful to minors.

Supporters say the new law, which went into effect Monday, closes a loophole that prompted the state's highest court to overturn the conviction

of a man accused of sending sexually explicit instant messages to someone he believed was a 13-year-old girl.

The Supreme Judicial Court, ruling in a case in February, found that the state's obscenity law didn't apply to instant messages. The new law, passed quickly by the state Legislature after the ruling, added instant messages, text messages, e-mail and other electronic communications to the old law.

The changes amount to "a broad censorship law that imposes severe content-based restrictions" on the dissemination of constitutionally protected speech, the lawsuit argues.

The plaintiffs include the American Civil Liberties Union of Massachusetts, the Association of American Publishers, the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund and other groups. They argue that the expanded law effectively bans from the Internet anything that may be considered "harmful to minors," including material adults have a First Amendment right to view, including information about contraception, pregnancy, sexual health, literature and art.

"For most communications over the Internet, it is not possible for a person sending or posting the communication to ensure that the communication will not be read or seen by a minor," the lawsuit states.

The law is written in such a way that it encompasses "all Internet communications - such as postings on websites and through listservs, which might be read or seen by a minor - and not merely those communications directed to a specific minor."

Supporters of the law said the change will help protect children from online sexual predators. Penalties include to up to five years in prison or a fine of as much as 10,000 for a first offense.

The lawsuit, filed in U.S. District Court, names Massachusetts Attorney General Martha Coakley and district attorneys around the state as defendants, citing their authority to prosecute violations of the law.

A spokeswoman for Coakley said the lawsuit was being reviewed.

Half of Social Networkers Worried About Privacy

Half of Americans who have a profile on social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace are worried about their privacy, according to a new poll.

The Marist survey showed that people over 60 are the most worried about privacy, and women are more concerned than men.

"We're in an era of information. Some people are concerned, reluctant and skittish about the extent of online information. There's a privacy element that some people feel is getting lost," said Dr. Lee Miringoff, director of the Marist College Institute for Public Opinion.

Privacy on social networking sites is an ongoing issue. Facebook recently changed its policies to give users more control over how much information from their profiles is public following protests from privacy watchdogs and consumers about the difficulty in changing default

account settings.

"It doesn’t take much to increase the concern factor and when headlines start blaring about breakdowns in privacy, that goes a long way to raising people’s concerns," Miringoff added.

The poll showed that 27 percent of the 1,004 people who took part in the survey were concerned about privacy on social networking websites, and a further 23 percent were very concerned.

Older Americans are more worried about privacy, he said, because social networking websites do not come as naturally to them as to younger people who have a more carefree attitude about the sites and privacy.

Overall, 43 percent of Americans said they keep in touch via social networking websites such as Facebook, MySpace and LinkedIn. Forty percent of men, and 45 percent of women, said they had a profile on a networking site.

German Minister Calls for Internet ’Honour Code’

Germany’s consumer minister, who vowed to delete her Facebook account in protest at the networking site’s privacy policies, called Monday for an Internet "honour code" to protect personal data.

"We need an honour code... 10 golden rules - short, sharp and clear," Ilse Aigner told Die Welt daily in an interview.

"Such rules can only come from the Internet community. It would be good if users themselves made suggestions. We could base them on social networks that already have a ’netiquette’.

"The Internet could become the pillory of the 21st century. The trend is worrying," added the minister.

Last month, Aigner, a member of Chancellor Angela Merkel’s conservatives, said she would remove her page from Facebook after failing to receive assurances from the US firm that her private data were secure.

"Anyone who visits a social networking site should know that it’s a business model. The service is not free. We users pay for it with our private data," Aigner said.

She launched another broadside at Facebook saying she had become a member of other social sites with better privacy controls.

With these sites, "I can decide to open doors and windows and I can better control what personal information I share with others," she said.

"On Facebook, the reverse is true: I have to go through the cumbersome process of changing my security setting to close these doors and windows and protect my privacy.

"Facebook boss Mark Zuckerberg has indicated that in principle, he does not want to change anything. In contrast, his firm wants to use members’ private profiles for commercial purposes," the minister added.

Partly for historical reasons, Germany is particularly sensitive about privacy issues, with campaigners bristling at plans by US Internet giant Google to launch its "Street View" service in Germany later this year.

"Street View" allows Internet users to view panoramic still photographs at street level from spots around the world, with images taken from specially equipped vehicles.

Officials and campaigners in Germany called the service an invasion of privacy and a potential security risk.

China Seeks To Reduce Internet Users' Anonymity

A leading Chinese Internet regulator has vowed to reduce anonymity in China's portion of cyberspace, calling for new rules to require people to use their real names when buying a mobile phone or going online, according to a human rights group.

In an address to the national legislature in April, Wang Chen, director of the State Council Information Office, called for perfecting the extensive system of censorship the government uses to manage the fast-evolving Internet, according to a text of the speech obtained by New York-based Human Rights in China.

China's regime has a complicated relationship with the freewheeling Internet, reflected in its recent standoff with Google over censorship of search results. China this week confirmed it had renewed Google's license to operate, after it agreed to stop automatically rerouting users to its Hong Kong site, which is not subject to China's online censorship.

The Internet is China's most open and lively forum for discussion, despite already pervasive censorship, but stricter controls could constrain users. The country's online population has surged past 400 million, making it the world's largest.

Chen's comments were reported only briefly when they were made in April. Human Rights in China said the government quickly removed a full transcript posted on the legislature's website. But the group said it found an unexpurgated text and the discrepancies show that Beijing is wary that its push for tighter information control might prove unpopular.

Wang said holes that needed to be plugged included ways people could post comments or access information anonymously, according to the transcript published this week in the group's magazine China Rights Forum.

"We will make the Internet real name system a reality as soon as possible, implement a nationwide cell phone real name system, and gradually apply the real name registration system to online interactive processes," the journal quoted Wang as saying.

As part of that Internet "real name system," forum moderators would have to use their real names as would users of online bulletin boards, and anonymous comments on news stories would be removed, Wang is quoted as saying.

The State Council Information Office did not immediately respond to a

faxed request asking whether certain sections of Wang's address to the legislature were altered in the official transcript.

Wang's comments are in line with recent government statements that indicate a growing uneasiness toward the multitude of opinions found online. A Beijing-backed think tank this month accused the U.S. and other Western governments of using social-networking sites such as Facebook to spur political unrest and called for stepped-up scrutiny.

China has blocked sites like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, although technologically savvy users can easily jump the so-called "Great Firewall" with proxy servers or other alternatives. Websites about human rights and dissidents are also routinely banned.

Europe Overtakes Asia To Become Top Producer of Email Spam

Europe has overtaken Asia as the biggest source of email spam worldwide with Britain a major culprit, a report said Thursday.

Europe produced over a third of the world's total junk emails in the second quarter of 2010, slightly more than Asia, information technology security firm Sophos said. Asia had been ahead of Europe in the first quarter.

In terms of countries, it singled out Britain as a major contributor to Europe being given the dubious honour.

"The UK... saw a significant rise in the proportion of spam it relayed. With a total output of 4.6 percent of the world's spam, this puts the UK in fourth place overall compared with ninth earlier this year," the report said.

A steady increase in spam generation from France, Italy and Poland were also contributing factors leading to Europe's rise, it said.

Asian countries' rankings in the "hall of shame" generally fell, with both Vietnam and China dropping five places to tenth and twentieth, respectively.

The United States remained the world's single biggest generator of junk emails, accounting for 15.2 percent of total spam sent in the second quarter, up from 13.1 percent in the previous three months.

India came in second (7.7 percent) and Brazil took third place (5.5 percent).

South Korea (4.2 percent) came after Britain to be the world's fifth largest source of spam, followed by France (4.1 percent), Germany (4 percent), Italy (3.5 percent) and Russia (2.8 percent).

Sophos also said spam emails constituted 97 percent of all emails received by business email servers, "putting a strain on network resources and wasting a huge amount of time to lost productivity".

"It's an uphill struggle educating users about the dangers of clicking on links or attachments in spam mails, and that their computers may already be under the control of cybercriminals," said Sophos senior

technology consultant Graham Cluley.

"Spam will continue to be a global problem for as long as it makes money for the spammers. It makes commercial sense for the criminals to continue if even a tiny proportion of recipients clicks on the links."

Microsoft: Alleged Spy Worked as a Software Tester

The 12th person detained for allegedly spying for Russia worked as an entry-level software tester at Microsoft for nine months, the company confirmed Wednesday.

Alexey Karetnikov was deported to Russia on Tuesday after he admitted to an immigration judge to being in the U.S. illegally, according to a report in the Washington Post, citing anonymous federal law enforcement officials.

Microsoft then issued a short statement confirming the status of Karetnikov’s employment.

One law enforcement official told the Post there was insufficient evidence to charge Karetnikov with a crime. The Russian had "just set up shop" and was in the early stages of his mission.

A Facebook profile for a person named Alexey V. Karetnikov says he graduated last year from St. Petersburg State Polytechnic University and is married. His current employer is listed as Microsoft, with a previous job as a senior developer at a company called Neobit.

Karetnikov was apparently not connected with 10 other Russians accused of acting as unregistered agents for the Russian government. The 10 suspects pleaded guilty last week in a New York court to various actions, including secretly communicating with Russia and facilitating money transfers.

A judge then expelled them from the country. The U.S. and Russia agreed to a spy swap in Vienna, and a day later the 10 agents were handed over to Russia in exchange for four people accused of spying for the U.S., bringing an apparent end to a highly publicized case.

Two U.S. Men Jailed Up to 38 Years for Child Pornography

Two US men have been jailed for up to 38 years for their roles in an online child pornography ring involving some 500 people worldwide, many of whom personally abused children, officials said Friday.

Thomas Attebury, 40, was sentenced Thursday to 38 years in prison for using "a sophisticated, password-protected Internet bulletin board group, which existed to allow members to meet like-minded individuals with a sexualized interest in children, to discuss that interest and to trade images of child pornography," according to the US Department of Justice.

David Williams, 46, was sentenced to 25 years, while both were also ordered

to undergo lifetime supervised release after their prison terms.

"Both defendants pleaded guilty on previous dates to one count of conspiracy to advertise child pornography, one count of conspiracy to distribute child pornography, two counts of advertising child pornography and two counts of distributing child pornography" before a judge in Indianapolis, Indiana, the department said in a statement.

As part of his plea, "Attebury also admitted to the sexual abuse of three minors, one of whom was under the age of 12."

Williams was convicted in 1996 on charges stemming from the sexual abuse of a five-year-old child.

The men were nabbed by "Operation Nest Egg," an inter-agency US probe launched in early 2008 which targeted 26 defendants in the state of Indiana and another 500 located throughout the world for their involvement in the online group.

Twenty-two of those charged in Indiana have been arrested while four remain at large and are known only by their online identities.

Operation Nest Egg to date has led to more than 50 arrests and 39 convictions.

"Numerous members of the Internet-based bulletin board were found to have been personally sexually abusing children, for example Attebury and Williams," the Justice Department said.

Child pornography networks have proliferated with the rise of the Internet, and governments across the world - notably in Europe and the United States - have taken steps to crack down on abusers, remove child porn from the Web and punish traders and end users of the illicit material.

Man Claims to Own 84 Percent of Facebook

A New York man has filed suit, claiming that he contractually owns 84 percent of Facebook.

In a court filing originally unearthed by The Wall Street Journal, Paul Ceglia claimed that he entered into a contract with Mark Zuckerberg, owner of TheFacebook.com and later chief executive of Facebook.com to buy 50 percent of the company for $1,000. According to the contract Ceglia alleges Zuckerberg signed, the two agreed to pay Ceglia an additional 1 percent of the company from that day until the Web site was completed.

In a statement to the Journal, Facebook called the suit "frivolous".

The suit, originally filed with the Supreme Court of Allegany County in New York, includes a copy of the work for hire contract allegedly signed by Zuckerberg. It details two business ventures: work performed for the Streetfax database and the related programming language, as well as the continued development and design of "The Face Book".

The contract is allegedly signed by both Ceglia and Zuckerberg.

The alleged contract would require that Ceglia, the purchaser, pay

Zuckerberg $1,000 for each of the ventures. In return, Ceglia would own a 50 percent interest in the "software, programming language and business interests derived from the expansion of the [Facebook] service to a larger audience," and require Zuckerberg to perform the work for the StreetFax database.

It also includes the stipulation that Ceglia would be due an additional 1 percent of the company for every day past the due date, Jan. 1, 2004, that the Web site was delayed.

The filing also includes what appears to be a photocopy of a receipt for a check made out to a "Mark Zucherberg" [sic] for $1,000.

Lawyers for Zuckerberg and Facebook have attempted to move the hearing to the U.S. District Court in the Western District of New York.

Dump Microsoft, Use Linux to Save Money, U.K. Officials Suggest

U.K. government staff suggested replacing Microsoft Corp. operating systems on computers with free alternatives in response to a call for ideas for Prime Minister David Cameron s cost-cutting drive.

Cameron asked the 600,000 government workers last month to make suggestions on saving money as his administration seeks to cut Britain s record budget deficit. Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osborne today published a sample of the 56,000 submitted ideas, which including abandoning Microsoft, switching office lights off and centralizing stationery procurement.

"In terms of spending less, what about migrating the whole of government (the NHS, education etc.) from Microsoft products to Linux and open-source software like Openoffice," read one of the suggestions displayed on the Treasury website. Two of the 31 listed proposals, whose authors were not named, suggested dropping Redmond, Washington-based Microsoft.

Open-source software such as Linux and Openoffice offers free or very cheap alternatives to Microsoft s Windows and Office, the world s most popular operating system and productivity software. Osborne said before the Conservatives won power in the May 6 election that he favored the idea.

"We need to follow the example of businesses all over the world and take advantage of open-source technology," Osborne wrote in The Times of London in February 2009.

Osborne said today he is now asking the public to send in ideas about how the government should save money to narrow the 155-billion-pound ($235 billion) budget shortfall.

Most U.S. States Seek Google’s Fiber Network Help

Communities in every U.S. state but three - Delaware, Florida and South Dakota - have applied to become test markets for Google’s planned high-speed broadband network.

Approximately 1,100 communities and 194,000 individuals responded to

Google’s request for information about communities interested in getting the network, Google said on a new website about the program.

The company launched the site this week and said it is designed to thank people for their enthusiasm and share information about the project. The site lists every county in each state and U.S. territory that applied to become test markets.

In February, Google announced plans to build what it calls an "ultra-high-speed" fiber network in one or more trial locations. It plans to deliver 1 gigabit-per-second fiber connections to 50,000 to 500,000 people. End users will pay a "competitive price" for the access, Google says. The company plans to choose where to build the network by the end of this year.

The number of communities that expressed interest in the new network indicates strong demand for better broadband services than what is currently available. The U.S. ranks behind many developed countries in terms of broadband services based on throughput. According to an October 2009 report by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the U.S. ranks 23rd in the world, behind Poland, Greece, the Czech Republic and others, based on average advertised broadband download speed.

Google has noted that the strong interest in its program indicates demand. "If one message has come through loud and clear, it’s this: people across the country are hungry for better and faster Internet access," James Kelly, a Google product manager, wrote in a blog post earlier this year.

Microsoft Windows 2000, XP SP2 Reach End of Life

Microsoft on Tuesday released four security updates to fix flaws in Windows XP, Windows 7, and Microsoft Office. Three of the security bulletins are rated critical and the fourth is rated important.

Of the zero-day vulnerabilities patched Tuesday, Symantec is only seeing one being exploited in the wild. In just the few weeks since the Help and Support Center issue came to light, three public exploits have surfaced -- all using different attack mechanisms, said Joshua Talbot, security intelligence manager for Symantec Security Response. Symantec saw attack activity increasing on June 21, but it has since leveled out.

"Microsoft didn’t rate the Outlook SMB attachment vulnerability as critical, but we think it’s likely to be exploited," Talbot warned. "It appears fairly simple for an attacker to figure out and create an exploit for, which could cause executable file e-mail attachments, such as malware, to slip past Outlook’s list of unsafe file types. A user would still have to double-click on the attachment to open it, but if they do, the file would run without any warning."

Talbot offered a possible scenario that could involve a targeted attack against an organization. In this scenario, he explained, a user could get a socially engineered e-mail with a malicious attachment disguised as something innocuous. Once convinced to click on the attachment, nothing would appear to happen. The user might delete the message and move on, assuming the file to be corrupted. In reality, he said, malware was secretly installed.

As Oliver Lavery, director of security research and development for nCircle, sees it, July’s patches are pretty mundane. The most interesting vulnerability for the enterprise is MS10-045, which lets an attacker use a specially crafted UNC path in an Outlook attachment to bypass Outlook’s warning about opening potentially malicious attachments.

This is significant, Lavery said, because Operation Aurora and other high-profile e-mail attacks over the last year have been highly successful.

"The only startling advisory is MS10-044, which involves remote code execution via a Microsoft Access ActiveX control," Lavery added. "ActiveX vulnerabilities have been an ongoing problem for the last decade, and it’s troubling that even though the technology is largely obsolete, we’re still seeing an ongoing negative impact on security."

Lavery’s colleague, Tyler Reguly, senior security engineer for nCircle, said the most interesting part of July’s patch isn’t an advisory - it’s Windows 2000 official end of life. Some Microsoft customers may continue to get updates via Microsoft’s custom support agreement, he explained, but for most people, Tuesday was the end of the line.

"Another interesting patch is the one for cdd.dll, which had an advisory released a couple of months ago," Reguly said. "A Google search for cdd.dll and Windows 7 shows a number of gaming forums discussing a ’blue screen’ issue. As far as I’m aware, that was how this vulnerability came to light. Only the 64-bit version of Windows 7 is affected, along with Server 2008 R2."

Josh Abraham, security researcher at Rapid7, said it’s important for IT admins to keep in mind that Windows XP SP2 is now end of life. That means organizations should be verifying - if they have not already done so - that all their XP systems have been migrated to SP3.

"Customers should focus remediation efforts on MS10-042 and MS10-044 due to the ease of exploitation. Keep in mind that user awareness training is not a replacement for a solid patching process," Abraham added. "User awareness training does reduce the likelihood of a successful attack, but it does not mitigate it. An attacker only needs a single entry point into the network and that system can be leveraged to gain access to other devices."

Refreshed MySpace Desperately Seeks Users

MySpace is showing off today its new, polished look, which is a far cry from the hodge-podge of textboxes featuring strippers and porn star "friends." The "clean new profile" was announced by CEO Sean Percival who revealed his profile page in stark black and white (although won’t we kind of miss that passionate purple?)

Like competitor Facebook, MySpace has put the profile on the left and created a MySpace Stream, similar to Facebook’s newsfeed, and uploads Twitter status updates.

It makes more sense as to why MySpace is buying Threadbox, a social messaging service that replaces email and instant messenger accounts, and is incorporating it into their site. MySpace’s heyday of 2007 is gone and it seems to be a sinking ship of irrelevance against the onslaught of

Facebook, so it has to do something revolutionary to woo back a generation.

MySpace began losing users in 2008, when Facebook started muscling in its social network territory. By May 2009, Facebook's unique visitors outstripped MySpace 70,278,000 to 70,255,000 and has never stopped, according to d ata provided to PC World from comScore. As of June, Facebook's numbers were double those of MySpace - 141,638,000 to 66,633,000. In other words, since last year when both social networks were neck-and-neck, MySpace has dropped 5 percent while Facebook has grown 50 percent.

Shouldn't that be a sign the users have spoken?

While MySpace showed some slight upticks in a few months, most notably in March 2010 when users jumped to 70,136,000 - likely due to its revamp and "Discover and be Discovered" campaign, numbers slid back down in April and still lower in May and June.

So far, user comments on the new interface have been positive, unless you're one of those cynical folks who thinks that Percival might be editing out the negative comments on his profile page:

* "How much longer do I have to wait to get this profile style. I don't mind testing it!" net.xero wrote.

* "I like it. Less cluttered. Hope to see many more improvements," wrote Hockey BLADES.

I expect Myspace's modern-looking user interface and may woo back more visitors, but if history is any indicator, it's more likely that its numbers will be another quick rise and settle into a slow but inevitable sink.

Picnik in Picasa: Hands On

Google recently added some great new features to Picasa Web Albums, the search giant's photo-sharing site, thanks to the company's recent acquisition of the photo editing site Picnik. Picasa users can now tweak images right inside their Web browser without leaving Picasa, using Picnik's tools for functions like color correction, cropping, resizing, adjusting the exposure, and adding frames.

If you're already a Picnik user, then the new features will be immediately familiar; but if you've never seen Picnik before, here's a look at some of the new things you can do inside Picasa Web Albums.

The first thing you have to do is open Picasa Web Albums in your browser and select the photo you'd like to edit. chose a shot I took of the Flatiron Building in New York City.

To call up the Picnik editing tools you can either select "Edit in Picnik" from the Edit dropdown menu above your image, or click on the "Edit" button to the right of your image. (Click on these screen caps to enlarge them.)

Either method will bring up a pop-up window that contains the Picnik

editing tools and your photo. By default, you will see the Edit menu that includes options to rotate, crop, or resize your image. You can also adjust the photo for exposure, colors, sharpness, and red eye. On the far left there is also an autocorrect feature that lets Picnik quickly adjust the image for you.

Next to Edit, you'll see the Create tab where Picnik keeps its novelty items like icons and frames, but you can also find options to airbrush and fix blemishes, as well as play with the photo's color levels and other advanced features.

Across the top of the window are options for changing your interface language, and access to your Picnik account and premium features. The advanced tools like adjusting color levels, as well as some of the novelty items, are considered premium features that you can use for a small monthly fee.

Most of the features under the Edit tab use basic sliders to adjust your photo, and any changes you make will immediately be reflected in the image below. My shot of the Flatiron Building was taken with a fairly low-grade camera, so I decided to adjust the colors to make the image stand out a little more.

I decided to crop my photo, and focus on the Flatiron. Then I switched to the Create tab and added a sepia tone.

Again, Picnik gives you a simple slider to edit the photo, but for certain effects such as the sepia tone Picnik also offers a palette you can adjust for even greater control.

Using the Stickers and Frames options I was able to add a Creative Commons icon to the lower right side of the photo. I also made the icon a little bit transparent so that it wouldn't interfere too much with the main focus of the image. As you can see, I also added a frame with rounded edges. Again, all these effects were adjusted through slider controls.

To save, just click the "Save to my album" button on the upper right side, and select whether you want to replace your original or create a new copy of your photo.

After Picnik finishes saving, it returns you to the regular Picasa interface with your new photo. See my finished, edited image of the Flatiorn Building below (click to enlarge the shot).

Picnik in Picasa is an added convenience for anyone who uses Picasa on the Web, and overall the tools are helpful and simple to use.

The only downside I found was that, just like at Picnik.com, your photo editing session will be interrupted from time to time with offers to upgrade to a premium Picnik account. But if you can live with that, the new Picasa-Picnik integration offers some great functionality to Picasa Web. Check it out and let us know what you think in the comment section below.

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